
OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT



Section OM

STANDARDS FOR CAMP ACCREDITATION

The Operational Management standards include those basic administrative practices that relate to creating a positive, protective environment for campers, staff, and user groups. The standards include policies and procedures that address emergencies, protection of participants, and other areas of risk management and strategic planning.

ACA camps range from complete day camp and multiple-week resident camp programs to camps that provide only a few support services to user groups who lease their sites. Accordingly, the relevancy of the administrative practices detailed in this section may vary widely from camp to camp, depending on the circumstances and needs of a particular camp. These standards provide for the development of procedures in important areas, such as risk management, but do so without dictating the content of those procedures to each site or program. Many of the policies and procedures required by these standards may be implemented directly by the camp staff or may be provided to a user group with a copy of their contract agreement, or both.

APPLICABILITY

ALL camps score the Operational Management standards.

Foundational Practices

Standards that were initially examples of best practices in the industry have become so accepted that they are considered foundational practices. Some of these practices have also been adopted as regulations and laws by local, state, and national bodies. These practices continue to be important to the delivery of a positive camp experience. It is assumed that they are in practice and applicable to every camp. The annual review of these foundational practices is scored in Standard OM-1.

Foundational practices related to Operational Management include:

- Use and release of personal information
- Accounting practices
- Inventories
- Legal counsel
- Strategic planning
- Risk management of financial resources

OM-1 REVIEW OF FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES

Does the camp have written evidence of a policy in practice that the recommendations in the Foundational Practices are reviewed annually?
YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: The Foundational Practices that precede the standards are specific processes and practices that have been associated over time with quality camp management. Most of the practices are former standards that have become commonly accepted by camp professionals and/or the public. Some involve items that are commonly regulated by a governmental body. A few are recommendations by authoritative bodies related to specific issues in the camping field. This body of knowledge should be reviewed annually, noting any changes or issues that need to be addressed to assure that these Foundational Practices are operable (as applicable) in the camp setting. Written evidence may be dated check marks and notations in the document related to the Foundational Practices or other notations regarding the review of this body of knowledge.

The *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM* should be consulted for the Foundational Practices Review Sheet.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Director/staff explanation of review; visitor observation of written evidence of annual review.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED



OM-2 FIREARMS CONTROL

MANDATORY (ALL)

Does the camp require that all firearms and ammunition be stored under lock? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: This standard applies to firearms used in camp program activities, as well as to firearms that are the personal property of staff or participants. All firearms should be locked when not in use and stored in locations separate from ammunition. Trigger locks are acceptable when used correctly.

This standard is not intended to be applied to homes or buildings that: are on camp property and are used solely as private residences of staff, are designed for the exclusive use of the individual staff or families who live on-site, or are not accessible to campers, user groups, and staff. However, guns stored in the back of trucks that are accessible to campers and other persons on the property must be locked to meet the requirement of the standard. The appropriate Program standards should be consulted for information on target sports and access to nonfirearms.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of firearm and ammunition storage.

Does not apply if no firearms or ammunition are allowed.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs



OM-3 RISK-MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Has the camp developed written materials for risk-management planning that include:

OM-3A: Identification and analysis of risk exposures to humans and property resources? YES NO

OM-3B: Risk-control techniques currently being implemented to reduce, control, or prevent potential loss in identified exposure areas? YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: While the requirements of the accreditation standards address many of the commonly identified risk-management concerns in camp operations, camps need to evaluate their overall operations to identify areas that may either be site-specific or not addressed by individual standards. Camp administrators need to evaluate risk exposure in three major areas:

- ☐ Human Liabilities:
 - Standard of care liabilities (injuries to persons caused by negligence) – such injuries may result from conditions or factors related to health services, maintenance, vehicle operation, attractive nuisances, staff selection, staff and camper supervision, inappropriate actions by staff or campers, and other potential hazards involving the conduct of individuals.
 - Loss of human resources (participants, staff, and/or volunteers) – the impact of the loss of a human resource on the operation, e.g., loss of public credibility, loss of income, loss of campers or staff due to stress, injury, illness, death, or other impairment, etc.
- ☐ Operational Liabilities:
 - Contract liabilities – include, as examples, lease or rental contracts, contracts for service, program activity contracts, employment agreements, insurance and other policies that may bind the camp, etc.
- ☐ Property Resources:
 - Property, buildings, and equipment loss – a loss resulting from a fire, collapse, or other damage from natural disasters, a breakdown of machinery or equipment, other potential hazards related to facilities, property development, and the operation of equipment on the site, etc.

Risk-management materials should analyze the camp's risk exposure in all areas and specify techniques currently being implemented to reduce, control, or prevent any identified risks.

"Risk-control techniques" include identifying which of the following risk-control methods are being utilized and what specific techniques or steps are being undertaken as part of that method:

- ❑ Transfer – placing all or part of the risk exposure in the hands of another party, such as an insurance company. Another alternative in this regard is to contract with another party to assume risk exposure through contracts, waivers, or an assumption-of-risk agreement.
- ❑ Avoidance – eliminating a risk, such as rerouting a road so it does not go through the camp, or not offering a specific activity that may involve an inappropriate degree of risk.
- ❑ Retention – retaining all or a portion of a risk and accepting the consequences of the loss. Generally, risks are only retained when the cost is minimal (e.g., replacing screens) or when it is too costly to transfer the total risk (e.g., insurance deductibles and ceilings).
- ❑ Reduction – reduce the camp's exposure to risk by developing policies and procedures to keep the risk at an acceptable level. Reduction is usually used in combination with transfer and retention (e.g., reduce by training first aiders, but also by purchasing insurance).

Camps may follow the outline and process provided in the Risk Exposure Chart that is included in the *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM*, or they may develop their own outline. In either case, the chart identifies many of the risk areas requiring consideration by camp operators.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written materials specific to the camp; director explanation of process utilized; visitor observation of implementation of stated techniques, where possible.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED



OM-4 INCIDENT ANALYSIS

Has the camp established a system that includes input from outside advisors to:

- Annually review and analyze when and where incidents, accidents, and injuries occurred,
- Identify steps to reduce incidents, accidents, and injuries, and
- Modify procedures and implement changes as necessary?

YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: The intent of this standard is to ensure that the camp has a system to regularly review all facets of its program offerings and revise or develop appropriate policies, protocols, and risk-management materials. The camp may use a safety committee, camp-services committee, or other group with a representative mix of expertise in the camp's programs and clientele to analyze the operation of the camp. In this regard, it may also consult with other outside advisors such as consultants, parents, health-care personnel, insurance personnel, or other camp administrators. Annual fire and electrical safety exams (Standards SF-6 and SF-12), ropes course inspections (Standard PC-11), and health procedures review (Standard HW-4) may be included as part of this process.

Camps exclusively serving user groups may collect data from evaluation forms. Modifications or changes in any procedures must then be communicated to appropriate personnel and addressed in staff training.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Director/staff explanation of process for review, analysis, and change.



OM-5 ASSESSMENT OF STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

Does the camp have written evidence of a system in practice to verify, at least on an annual basis, that accreditation standards are being followed in applicable aspects of the camp's operation? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: Continual compliance with applicable standards is expected by the accreditation system and is so stated in the annual Statement of Compliance, signed by the camp representative. Written evidence of a system in practice to assure that the standards are being followed may include, as examples, the dates of review by camp staff persons, notations regarding specific areas of compliance, and reports regarding the review system.

Consult Appendix B for Annual Statement of Compliance.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written evidence of annual reviews.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Does not apply to camps that are being visited for the first time. ← under the current standards

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

OM-6 INTRUDERS

Does the camp have written procedures that address possible intrusion of unauthorized persons onto the campsite that include:

- Periodic review of security concerns of the site, and
 - Training for staff, and campers when appropriate, about steps to take in such instances?
- YES NO

INTERPRETATION: If the camp is operating on a public or nonowned site, "campsite" refers to the living and/or program areas being used by the camp groups(s). Precautionary procedures for user groups should be established and included in the group orientation (Standards OM-8 and OM-19).

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written procedures.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

OM-7 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Does the camp have written, site-specific emergency procedures established to respond appropriately to reasonably foreseeable emergencies, including:

- Natural disasters, typical of the area, such as storms, earthquakes, wildfires, floods; and
 - Building and site evacuations made necessary by such events as local threats or power outages?
- YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: Emergency procedures should be specific to the site, staffing, type of camp operation, and clientele. Procedures would normally include what to do in case of storm, earthquake, fire, or power outage, as well as site or building evacuation procedures. The complexity of procedures will vary, based on camp location, type of operation, staff responsibility for supervision of individuals, and availability and responsibility of staff when user groups are present. Procedures should include emergency training guidelines as demonstrated in Standard OM-12 and the contact of local officials as required in Standard SF-3.

The *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM* should be consulted for additional information on emergency procedures.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written procedures.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED



OM-8 SAFETY ORIENTATION

Does the camp require that campers, staff, and user groups be oriented to established safety regulations and emergency procedures in the general camp area, based on a written list that includes:

- Identification of boundaries for living areas and general activity areas,
- Expectations for appropriate behavior,
- Precautions concerning natural or physical hazards of the site?

YES NO

INTERPRETATION: The intent of this standard is to address safety issues general to the camp operation and clientele served – not to duplicate safety regulations for specific program activities and transportation, which are covered in those sections. Boundaries, behaviors, precautions, and emergency procedures can be described verbally in an orientation, marked with posted signs, and provided in information given to group leaders.

The written list may involve bullet points on a memo, signs posted on the wall, or a literal checklist. The intent is to assure that all points are covered with all groups, campers, and staff.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of a written list of items to be included in safety orientation; staff description of orientation procedures.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED



Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

OM-9 INSURANCE COVERAGE

OM-9B does not apply if the camp does not own buildings.

OM-9C does not apply if vehicles are not used in camp operations.

OM-9E does not apply if the camp never provides day, resident, or short-term camp programs.

Applies to:

- **Day camps**
- **Resident camps**
- **Short-term resident programs**
- **User-group programs**

Does the camp have written evidence that the following insurance coverage is in place:

OM-9A: General liability coverage? YES NO

OM-9B: Fire and extended-risk coverage on buildings? YES NO

OM-9C: Motor vehicle insurance (as applicable):

- Coverage on all owned, hired, or leased vehicles, and/or
- Employer's nonownership liability insurance on all non-owned vehicles?

YES NO

OM-9D: Workers' compensation for all eligible staff? YES NO

OM-9E: Coverage for campers (carried by the camp or written evidence that each camper has such coverage):

- For resident campers — health and accident coverage?
- For day campers and short-term campers — accident coverage?

YES NO

INTERPRETATION: Camps should check on exclusions in their liability coverage to be sure all camp programs (e.g., tripping, horseback riding, aquatics, ropes course, etc.) are covered. When third-party providers of activities or services are used, camps are advised to check on their insurance coverage and requirements. Coverage may include self-insurance that can be verified by evidence of the allocation of particular assets to cover costs.

Camper coverage may be provided by the camp, parents, agency, school, or individual. When the camp does not provide the coverage, written evidence of coverage must be provided (e.g., parent's signature, along with the policy number).

While international staff may have insurance provided by the placement organization, administrators need to check their contracts with the organization to ensure that adequate coverage is provided. Workers' compensation is generally required for all employees, including international staff. Camps are advised to check state law for the applicability of workers' compensation to volunteers.

Camps are advised to evaluate whether motor-vehicle insurance coverage is needed both for vehicles leased for the entire season, as well as those hired for a day trip. Vehicles leased for the season need coverage for liability, as well as for possible physical damage. Camps should also consider the implications of the use of staff cars for camp business and determine their insurance coverage accordingly.

The *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM* should be consulted for additional information on insurance coverage.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of policies, binders, or letters of confirmation from agent(s) showing current policies are in place, and evidence of individual coverage or self-insurance (if applicable).

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED



OM-10 PERSONAL PROPERTY REGULATIONS

Does the camp require that campers, staff, and user groups be advised in writing of regulations for possession and use of:

- Alcohol and drugs,
- Personal sports equipment,
- Vehicles,
- Animals, and
- Weapons?

YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: "Personal sports equipment" may include archery equipment, bats, hockey sticks, climbing gear, or other equipment that should be stored and handled safely for the protection of all individuals. "Animals" may include pets and animals brought to the camp for use in its program, such as horses. Camps may require appropriate health and immunization records for any animals allowed in camp.

Camp regulations may also address the camp's search-and-seizure policies when possession of illegal substances or weapons is suspected. Foundational Practices Item 7 specifies that policies should also address acceptability of other personally owned items (e.g., radios, cameras), expectations regarding their use and storage, and any liability for loss or damage of such items.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written regulations/policy; director description of process for sharing information with campers, staff, and user groups..

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

OM-11 SMOKING POLICIES

Does the camp prohibit smoking or allow smoking only in designated areas that are away from children and nonsmokers? YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs
- User-group programs

INTERPRETATION: The standard requires that either smoking be prohibited in camp or that smoking areas be designated away from children and nonsmokers. Camps providing programs to families may consider an exception for parents who choose to smoke while their own children are with them in the designated smoking area.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Director/staff explanation of policies and their implementation.

PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY CAMP

Standards OM-12 through OM-17 should be scored for day camp, resident camp (including trip/travel programs), and other short-term resident programs provided by the camp. Standards OM-12 through OM-17 *DO NOT APPLY* to user groups.



OM-12 STAFF EMERGENCY TRAINING

Does the camp have a program of training and rehearsal to prepare the staff to carry out their responsibilities in emergency situations? YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs

INTERPRETATION: Training and rehearsal will likely differ from camp-to-camp, based on the type of camp operation. For example, the procedures for staff emergency training for day and resident camp staff who supervise individual campers may be different from the procedures for staff who assist with short-term programs. Training for or rehearsal by campers may be appropriate in some situations, such as fire or storm drills.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Director/staff description of training and rehearsal for staff.

OM-13 INCIDENT REPORTING

Does the camp require the staff to complete written reports describing incidents and accidents? YES NO

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs

INTERPRETATION: Maintaining accident reports for injuries that require professional medical treatment is scored in Standard HW-21. The intent of this standard is to document circumstances, witnesses, and actions in serious situations that result in, or nearly result in, injury or danger to individuals. The camp director has the responsibility to determine the level of severity or seriousness of incidents that must be reported. Examples of such incidents include fires, natural disasters, danger from intruders or trespassers, crises arising out of camper, staff, or user group behavior (e.g., fighting, serious emotional outbursts, threatening others), or other situations posing potentially serious safety threats.

This standard also covers instances involving a potential serious injury from "near misses" and other emergencies that may not result in injuries requiring an accident report but nevertheless are potentially harmful to campers or staff. Examples of such circumstances may include lost campers, near drownings, or the use of drugs or alcohol by staff or participants.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of reports; director/staff description of reporting procedures.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

OM-14 MISSING-PERSON PROCEDURE

Has the camp developed written search-and-rescue procedures for persons lost, missing, or runaway, and has staff been trained in their responsibilities to implement those procedures? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: Missing-person procedures should include appropriate steps to contact camp authorities, local and state emergency resources, and parents or guardians. These procedures should specify the responsibilities of staff in carrying out procedures with individual campers in day and resident camp and for assisting short-term program participants.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written procedures; director/staff description of training provided.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs

OM-15 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

Does the camp have written emergency plans that include communication procedures, reviewed with staff, that specify:

OM-15A: A system for communication from persons at the site of the incident (including out-of-camp trips) to camp administrative and health personnel or community emergency services as appropriate (e.g., health, law enforcement)? YES NO

OM-15B: Procedures for contacting parents or guardians of minors directly supervised by the camp? YES NO

OM-15C: The camp's procedures for dealing with the media? YES NO

INTERPRETATION: Procedures for emergency communication from all locations, including program areas out of camp, must be carefully and thoroughly developed prior to the urgency and demands attendant to an actual emergency. Communication systems may include cellular phones, electronic devices, or signals where appropriate, as well as alternative plans to summon emergency help and relay necessary information. Emergency communication procedures may be a part of the written materials established in Standard OM-7.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written procedures; director/staff description of procedures and their communication to staff.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs

OM-16 CAMPERS IN PUBLIC AREAS

For the protection of campers in public places or when in contact with the public, does the camp implement written policies that specify:

- Guidelines for ratios, location, and responsibilities of staff supervising campers,
 - Safety regulations and behavior guidelines for campers, and
 - Emergency procedures for campers and staff if a person is separated or missing from the group?
- YES NO

Does not apply if the camp is not operated on property open to the public or the camp does not take campers to public areas.

Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs

INTERPRETATION: This standard applies to all activities where public contact with campers who are directly supervised by the camp can reasonably be expected, including tripping, tours, field trips, sporting events, and the use of public facilities or parks. Procedures should address regulations and guidelines for safety when on public transportation or at motels/hotels, public campgrounds, public restrooms, public rest stops, amusement parks, or other public attractions.

Supervision policies should establish when direct staff supervision is required, when and under what conditions groups of campers may be on their own for a period of time, and how staff with large groups will communicate with one another. For example, procedures for motels/hotels may include securing rooms in blocks so that campers are not by themselves, setting specific room curfew timelines, establishing staff procedures for monitoring halls, and regulating camper access to staff room numbers. At public attractions, procedures should be established for dividing campers into groups, periodic check-ins, behavior guidelines, emergency contact and meeting areas, and off-limits areas. Campers must be trained in what to do if approached by a stranger, what information to share (or not share) about the camp or group, and how to find emergency assistance if staff are not immediately available.

Procedures may also need to be established for the protection of campers on opening and closing days of the camp when many visitors are on-site. When a camp is operating in an area open to the public, procedures for supervision may include a means for identifying or distinguishing campers from the public, such as t-shirts, hats, name tags, or other visual means of identification.

The *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM* should be consulted for additional information on protecting campers in public places.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written procedures; director/staff description of procedures to orient campers and staff.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

OM-17 CAMPER SECURITY

Does the camp have written policies in practice that specify procedures and responsibility for minors, including:

OM-17A: Release of campers who are minors to a parent or to persons other than the parent or legal guardian? Yes No

OM-17B: Checking on absentee campers at the beginning of the day or session? Yes No

INTERPRETATION: Standard OM-17A involves procedures for releasing campers to authorized persons during camp (for example, a visit) or at the end of the camp session. These procedures may include the policy that the camp will follow if a minor is not picked up within a reasonable time (e.g., supervision requirement and possible extra charges).

Standard OM-17B addresses “absentee campers” who are participants, but who are not present at the camp when the camp expects to assume responsibility for those individuals. The policies should specify when and how the camp will make contact with a Parent/guardian on any unexplained absentee camper. For example, day camps normally assume responsibility for a camper at the beginning of each day, while resident camps assume responsibility for a participant on the first day of a session.

The *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM* should be consulted for a sample release form.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of written procedures; director/staff explanation of procedures in practice.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED



Applies to:

- Day camps
- Resident camps
- Short-term resident programs

RENTING TO USER GROUPS

This subsection addresses the rental or leasing of camp facilities to user groups. Standards OM-18 and OM-19 *DO NOT APPLY* if the camp does not lease facilities or services to user groups.



OM-18 USE AGREEMENT

Does the camp utilize a written use agreement, signed by authorized representatives of the camp and the user group, that includes the following (as applicable):

- Terms of use, including dates, times, and costs;
- Cancellation, minimum fees, and refund policies;
- Services that will be provided by the camp for the group, such as food service, recreation options, program staff, transportation, and
- Costs and conditions for use of any recreational equipment or services?

Yes No

INTERPRETATION: This standard does not require that all items listed will be provided for all user groups. The use agreement will normally include requirements from Standard OM-19. Conditions for use may specify such aspects as adult supervision, expectations for youth groups, clean-up responsibilities, and the reporting of damaged facilities or equipment.

The *ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM* should be consulted for information on sample guidelines and considerations for use agreements.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of forms and information used.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED

Applies to:

- **User-group programs**



OM-19 USER-GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES

Applies to:

- User-group programs

Does the camp require the written user-group agreement to specify:

- Party responsible to provide first aid, emergency care, and emergency transportation,
 - Party responsible to supervise the group and its behavior,
 - Party responsible to supervise any specialized recreational activities,
 - Required orientation to the camp's safety procedures and regulations, and
 - Any insurance coverage to be provided by the group?
 - *Recommendations to user group leaders of need for appropriate screening policies for all user group staff with responsibility for or access to campers.
- YES NO

INTERPRETATION: Standard HW-24 defines the responsibility for the provision of first aid and emergency care. Standard OM-19 covers the supervision of the group and its behavior, including defining who has the authority to eject individuals from the property. This standard may be combined with the requirements of Standard OM-18.

"Specialized recreation activities" are any activities whose safe conduct requires supervision by persons with specialized training and skills (e.g., swimming, archery, ropes course, etc.). Supervision for general recreation activities, along with all other general activities not specified in the contract, would normally fall under that part of this standard that addresses the supervision of the group and its behavior.

Orientation for user groups should include general safety regulations, communication in an emergency (e.g., weather, missing persons), security concerns, and warning systems. Groups should know how to get emergency assistance and how to contact the site owner.

COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION: Visitor observation of information and/or forms utilized; director description of orientation process.

WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED